

Amherst Fair Housing/Housing Partnership Committee Fiscal Year 2002

The Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee (HP/FH) continued its mission to support affordable housing in Amherst and to ensure equal opportunity of buyers and renters.

Throughout the summer and fall, the HP/FH continued its strong advocacy for the proposal of 26 affordable units at 12 Longmeadow Drive, to be built by the non-profit organization Hampden Hampshire Housing Partnership (HAP). These units would remain affordable in perpetuity and would help meet family housing needs for persons employed as teachers, nurses, branch managers, service industry employees, etc.

The Committee also strongly recommended that the Town adopt the Community Preservation Act and celebrated that it did! We are pleased that Audrey Child, a longtime member of our committee, was appointed to serve on the committee overseeing the distribution of CPA funds. Much of our discussion revolved around creating a list of possible proposals, prioritizing them and considering how best to advocate for housing needs with this new CPA Committee.

Discussions regarding the possibility of a UMass-Amherst joint family housing development continue. The Committee chair was included in discussions with acting University Chancellor Williams, who strongly supported this endeavor. The Committee met with Lin Torto, Assistant State Secretary of Administration and Finance, who expressed her enthusiasm for finding means of supporting this effort. It also heard reports by the housing planners hired by the University.

During the spring, much of our work focused on forming and publicizing our positions on Town Meeting articles, both to the Select Board and to Town Meeting members.

Further work this year included meeting with George Ryan of Habitat for Humanity, a discussion with the Planning Board's sub-committee on zoning, and site visits to land that might have possible uses for future affordable housing. Individual Committee members continued to attend state and regional conferences on affordable housing strategies and the legislative agenda to support housing.

Serving on the Committee this past year have been: Penny Pitts, Chair; Audrey Child, Windy Dayton, Joan Lindeman, Mariana Luz, Frank Wells, Members; Joanne Levenson, Associate Member. Mariana Luz was recently elected our new chair. The Committee gratefully acknowledges the support and work of Michele Leaf, who served this committee for many years.

The Committee wishes to express its heartfelt thanks to Senior Town Planner Connie Kruger for her years of service to the Town and as staff liaison to our committee. She has recently accepted a job advising towns state-wide on affordable housing options. Our letter of thanks to her includes the following:

"We couldn't have functioned meaningfully without your unending willingness to shoulder so much of the responsibility for finding information we needed to do our work, your exceptional organizational abilities to keep us and our meetings flowing, your patience with us as we each needed to learn the vast amounts of material underlying proactive work in this field, your quiet enthusiasm and gentle encouragement when our insecurities and disappointments could have discouraged us."

Submitted by Penny Pitts, Chair, Fiscal Year 2002